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as munificent patrons of learning. The proudest amongst these were the Medici of Florence, who, time out of memory, had occupied a high position in the republic, and had filled many of its most distinguished offices. The head of the family, at the commencement of the fifteenth century, was Giovanni de Medici, who added to his already large store of wealth by his close attention to business, and secured the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens by his affability and moderation. His son Cosmo succeeded him in his wealth and dignities. The earlier part of his public career was disturbed by some of those intestine broils which seem inseparable from a popular form of government. He triumphed, however, in the long run over the malice of his enemies, and spent the greater part of a long life in uninterrupted tranquillity and prosperity. He had no greater pleasure than the encouragement of learning and the society of learned men; and his efforts raised Florence to the proud position of being the resort of all the wisest, wittiest, and ablest scholars, poets, and artists of the day. The study of the ancient classics had at this period but just commenced. A few—and a few only—of the marvellous productions of ancient genius had been dragged to light from the convents and castles, in which they had slept since the fall of the empire, but by the exertions of Boccaccio, who was as famed for his learning as for his humour, the study of the Greek language had been introduced into Italy, and during his lifetime had been cultivated with success. At his death, however, it fell into neglect, but after a short interval was again revived through the exertions of Emanuel Chrysoloras, a noble Greek, who was entrusted with several important embassies to Italy, while Constantinople was threatened by the Turks, and taught it himself at Florence and other cities about the beginning of the fifteenth century. He left behind him many zealous disciples amongst the Italians, who laboured strenuously and with some success, to follow up the work which he had begun. But, though they kept their attention fixed upon their work, and kept alive the interest of the literati in it, it was impossible that they could make much progress. The number of works which they had the opportunity of examining was extremely small, and they were endeavouring to acquire a dead language by the slow and uncertain process of guessing out the meaning, construction, and connexion. They had none of the aids with which every school-boy now finds himself furnished—grammars, exercises, commentaries, keys, notes, and the oral instructions of men to whom, from their earliest years, the dead languages have been an all-absorbing subject of thought and study, based upon the labours of thousands who have trod the same path before them. Let us remember all that we have, and we shall have a better idea of all that they wanted, the countless tomes of every date since the fifteenth century to the present time, the huge heap of annotations, emendations,

and various readings, containing so much rubbish mingled with so much sterling thought. With all this, some of us found Greek difficult enough; many of us have lost our little share of it long ago; what then must have been the difficulty of those whose only hope lay in their own brains and industry? It is hardly to be expected that the study would not have flagged and finally died out, had it not received an unexpected stimulus.

The fall of Constantinople filled Europe with terror and astonishment; but whatever scandal it may have caused to the orthodox faith, was compensated by the assistance it brought to the cause of learning. The philosophers, who fled before the swords of the Janissaries, were received in Italy with open arms, and their welcome was the warmer because they carried with them a large store of rare and valuable manuscripts, some of them containing gems of antiquity which were before unknown to the scholars of the west. The fittest place to bear such treasures to, was the court of the Medici—for court it might be called—where great wealth spent on the noblest objects was backed up by a supremacy over a whole nation, which was founded only in respect and affection, and was not sanctioned by a single law. The exiles were received with characteristic hospitality, and in the pile of manuscripts which they laid at Cosmo's feet, he found himself more than rewarded for all the favours he could heap upon them. Demetrius, Chalcondyles, Johannes Andronicus, Calistus, Constantius, and Johannes Lascaris, and many others, whose names lent lustre to the last years of the tottering empire, met with an honourable reception, and by their instructions and example gave learning an impetus which has carried it on without faltering to its present proud position. Libraries, one of which is still, after a lapse of three centuries, a favourite resort of the scholar, were founded, and copies of the various works were rapidly multiplied by the printing press. The Greeks did not fail to trumpet abroad the praises of their benefactor, and the kindness and encouragement he showed them is the best claim to immortality, which the Medici family possess.

The friendship which was shown to learned men by his grandfather was cultivated in a still greater degree by Lorenzo de Medici, that great light of Italian literature and art. Their labours were repaid by his bounty, and encouraged by his smiles; professorships were established for giving instruction in the Greek philosophy and literature, to which scholars from all parts of Europe—from England, amongst others—resorted. Lorenzo was no less remarkable for his political wisdom and commercial success than for the delight afforded him by the society of the learned, and consequently the Greeks were frequent guests at his splendid villa in the environs of Florence. It is a singular circumstance that this great man should have found a biographer worthy of him, after the lapse of three centuries, in the greatest of our commercial emporia.

THE LAND OF GOLD.

"THE Britishers have got a pretty considerable location in Australia;" said a down-east friend of ours the other day; "but I calculate they won't know how to manage no-how. Too many genteel young fellers 'll go there, and contrivouses 'll spring up, where tents and grub shops and stores 'ud do better!"

This opinion seems to prevail to a great extent in England as well as in this country, for we find the following in *The Times*.—"Young men accustomed only to the desk, and unfitted for any mechanical occupation, will find it next to impossible to procure employment in Australia." Almost every letter that is sent home from Melbourne, and nearly every newspaper published in the colony, repeats this warning. But in spite of warnings of every kind, young men from shops and counting-houses appear to be the very persons who, for the last twelve months, have filled the greater part of the berths in emigrant ships bound for the land of gold. Again and again it has been stated that these are not the class of colonists

necessary to the commercial prosperity of the colony, or likely to prosper in it themselves. For many years to come, physical, rather than mental, labourers will be the need of California and Australia. Melbourne, although the richest city in the world, is, at the present moment, the worst lighted, ventilated, and paved; and its inhabitants, although the most wealthy, taken as a body, are as badly lodged as the peasantry of the poorest villages in Germany, or the dwellers in the most miserable log-huts in the backwoods. Nevertheless, there is abundant employment in Australia, besides gold-digging, for tens of thousands of artisans and labourers. Every man who has the strength and will to wield an axe or a spade may succeed in Australia; for, before the colony is fitted to receive intellectual labourers, houses must be built, roads and railroads made, bridges erected, and other social conveniences supplied. Handicraftsmen of all descriptions, agricultural labourers, and "backwoodsmen," are the most likely men to succeed in Australia.

It appears from a paper drawn up for the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, by Mr. Westgarth, that the colony of Victoria—the modern name for the Port Phillip district—is in a most flourishing condition, both as regards its moral and commercial prospects. The history of the colony, as recorded by Mr. Westgarth, presents the most remarkable instance of commercial progress that, perhaps, the world ever saw. Ten years ago, the towns of Sidney, Melbourne, and Port Phillip were mere entrepôts for the agricultural produce from the interior of the country; and Australia itself was principally notorious for the lamentable failure of the settlement at Swan River. In 1851, the colony of Victoria contained a population of about 95,000 souls; in 1852, that number had more than doubled, and at this moment it cannot be estimated at less than 300,000. Nothing can be a more astonishing or decisive proof of the advance of this colony than the marvellous rapidity with which its population has increased. Twenty years since the white man was unknown in the districts which he has now made his home: the discovery of the gold took place, and, in a short time, the colony of Victoria—the principal auriferous district in Australia—was unrivalled for the magnificent scale of its wealth and commerce. There is no resisting “facts and figures,” so we will make use of a few of them. In March, 1851, the population of Melbourne was estimated at 23,000; at the present moment that city and its outskirts cannot contain fewer than 85,000 inhabitants; two years since the town of Geelong numbered about 8,000 souls; at present it cannot, certainly, have less than 20,000. The shipping entered inwards to the colony of Victoria, in 1851, comprised 669 vessels, with an aggregate tonnage of 126,000 tons; in 1852, the number of vessels had increased to 1,657, with an aggregate tonnage of 408,000 tons—an increase of about 325 per cent. in a single year! In the same period, the value and extent of the imports and exports to and from Victoria had increased in like proportion. In 1851, the imports were valued at £1,056,000; in 1852, they had increased to £4,044,000; the exports for the same years were—in 1851, £1,424,000; in 1852, £7,452,000! But in regard to this latter item, the exports for the year 1852 may be considered as greatly understated when given as £7,500,000; for large as the sum may appear, it has been ascertained to be very far short of the actual truth. Gold is the principal article of export from the colony of Victoria; and the probability is, that almost every person who left the diggings for Europe or America took with him a large quantity of the precious metal, which would not necessarily come into the official records. In 1852, the customs returns gave 1,975,000 ounces as the quantity exported; but 1,600,000 ounces, in addition, have been traced as having been exported from the neighbouring colonies, or otherwise brought from Australia without official cognizance. Taking these circumstances into consideration, and valuing the precious metal at its now ascertainable worth, it appears that gold to the value of upwards of £15,000,000 sterling—twice the amount given in the customs returns—has been dug from the bowels of the earth, washed from the sands of the rivers, or discovered by fortunate “prospectors,” in various parts of Australia, in a single year!

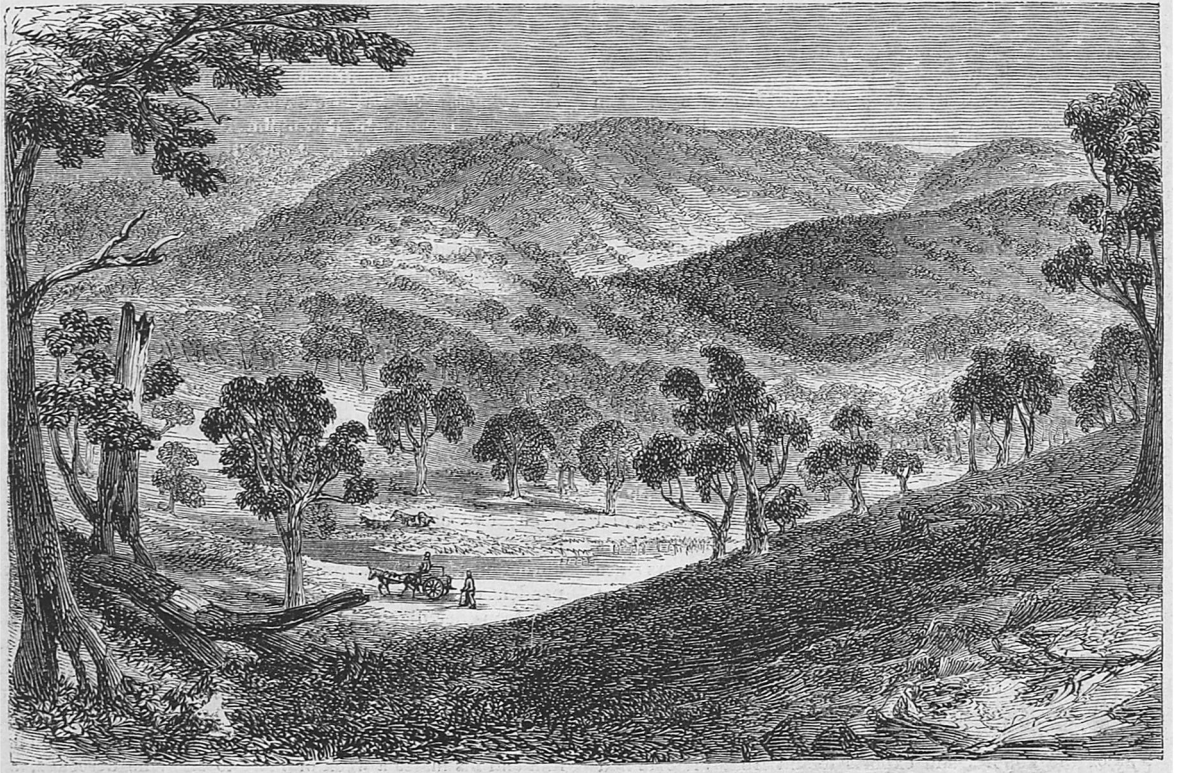
In fact, the colony of Victoria is at this moment the richest, and the most varied field for enterprise in the whole world. A man with a little money can buy land and rear sheep; or he can invest it in articles of consumption at home, and make a good profit by retailing them in Melbourne and the diggings. In the interior of the country, every child is a help instead of an incumbrance; and a man with a family, whose ages vary from three years to twenty, is as well off as if he had a large capital. Every kind of manual labour is at a premium in the cities of Melbourne, Geelong, and Sidney; and in the interior the scarcity of hands is very severely felt. All sorts of provisions, likewise, are sold at highly remunerative prices.

This last phrase, which we take from the *Melbourne Argus* of April the 7th, naturally leads us to the conclusion that farming is a very profitable kind of employment in Australia; and, opening a private letter which has been given us for

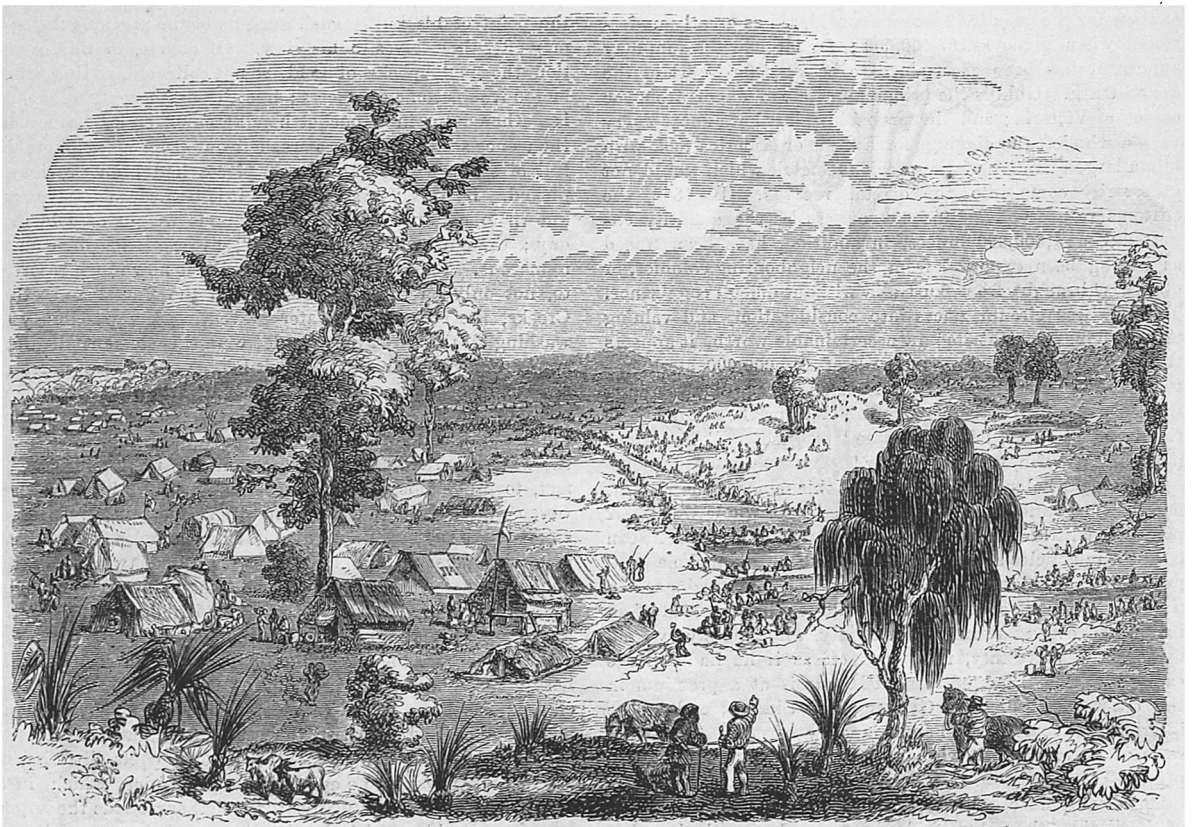
perusal, almost the first sentence we meet with is—“If you have any friends coming out with capital, advise them to buy land and try their hands at farming.”

It is well known that Mount Alexander—the district including Ballarat, the Bendigo, and the Forest Creek diggings—is the most auriferous region in Australia. In our first engraving (p. 180) we have a view of this celebrated mountain from what is called the Porcupine Road. The next (page 180) is a busy scene, Golden Point Ballarat—every one of the diggings has its golden point—is about seventy miles from Melbourne in a north-westerly direction, and about fifty from the thriving town of Geelong. At this spot it was that the celebrated “Cavenagh find” took place—as thus recorded in the *Geelong Advertiser* of September 27:—“On Saturday night last two brothers named Cavenagh arrived in Geelong with 60lbs. weight of gold, value £2,300, the produce of four weeks’ working. The party actually netted £100 per day.” The excitement consequent on the arrival of this news was immense, and “doctors, lawyers, merchants, tradesmen, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, shepherds, and labourers, all rushed off to the new El Dorado.” In the case of the Ballarat diggings, the speculators were not disappointed, for they still continue to be highly productive.

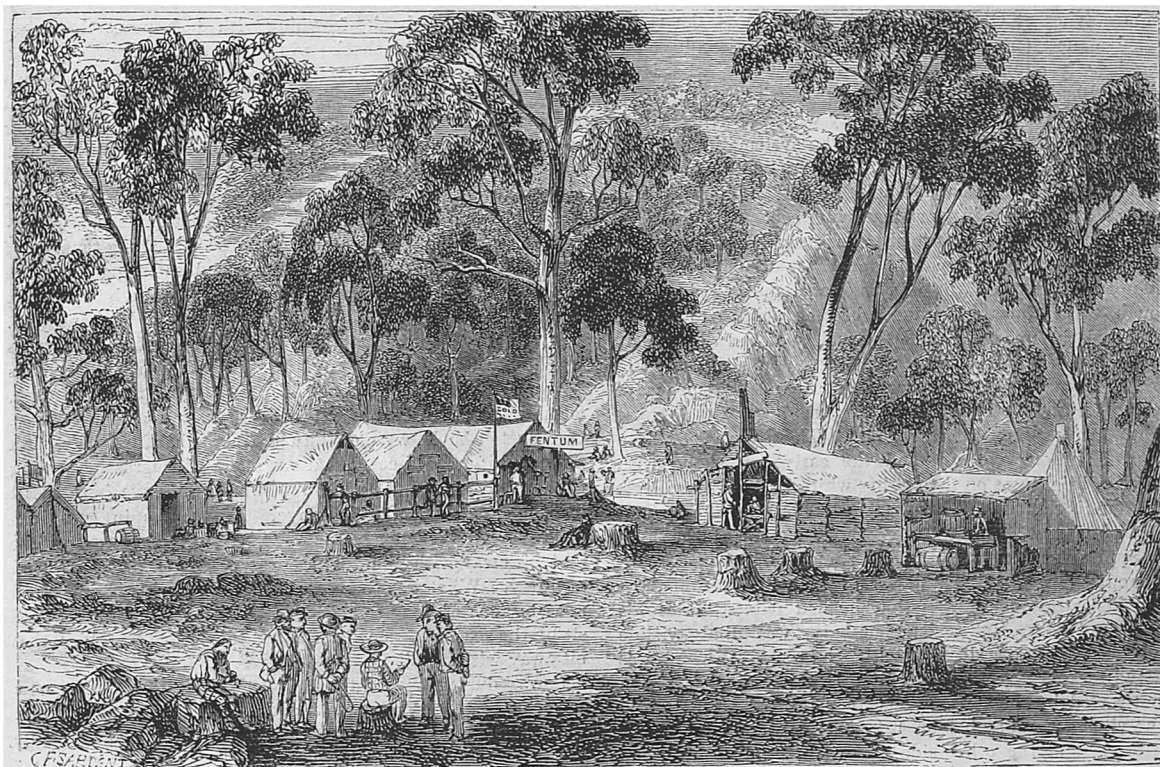
The two other engravings (page 181) speak eloquently for themselves. The districts all around have proved highly auriferous; and “enterprising men (we quote the own correspondent of the *Argus*) cannot fail to make a fortune.” The numerous dry diggings have been very successful of late; and it is by no means uncommon to see a man setting off to work in his hole, the only tool or implement that he carries with him being a large and pointed knife, called a “fossicking knife.” The mode of proceeding is by no means uninteresting. “Arrived at the hole, which, by the way, may have taken him and his mates a week or more to sink, he descends, and lighting a candle and his pipe, he lays himself out at full length on the rock which forms the bottom of his hole, and whilst he blows out the fragrant wreaths from his duteen, he quietly amuses himself, at the same time, by digging out with the point of his knife, such nuggets of the precious metal as may offer themselves to his view. Of course, in this operation, the small specks of gold are not collected, as this would be too troublesome a process; but the earth containing them is gathered up in a pocket handkerchief, and I have more than once seen two ounces washed out from a handkerchief full of stuff, whence the large pieces had been previously picked. By this “fossicking,” as it is termed, men have been known to obtain three and four pounds weight of gold in a day; though such cases are not, as a matter of course, numerous. This species of dry digging is now much resorted to, not only on the Bendigo, but on the Forest and other Creeks, the scarcity of water preventing the possibility of washing all the earth that would, were this element plentiful, amply repay the labour. Thus it happens that very much of the earth, now lying at the bottom or around the mouth of many of the holes, having been cast aside as useless during the drought, contains a per centage of gold sufficient to make the washing of it in the wet season highly remunerative. In fact, to prove this, after the recent showers up here, for they were no more than showers, many people were out prospecting amongst the refuse stuff thrown out of the holes, and I have met with persons who have thus collected two and three ounces in a few hours. I myself, not being too proud to dismount and become their possessor, picked up three pretty little nuggets that very handsomely offered themselves to my attention as I rode along past a number of deserted holes. It has often struck me that in many instances where a heavy find of gold has been made, very nearly as much of the precious metal is shovelled out with the earth as is gathered by the diggers; for with two and three ounce nuggets glittering in their sight, they have no eyes for the fine grains, which, in a rich hole, so thickly stud the earth that surrounds the larger nuggets. Besides which, let the digger search as carefully as he will, unless the whole of his good earth be washed, he will almost invariably throw out as much gold as he collects.”



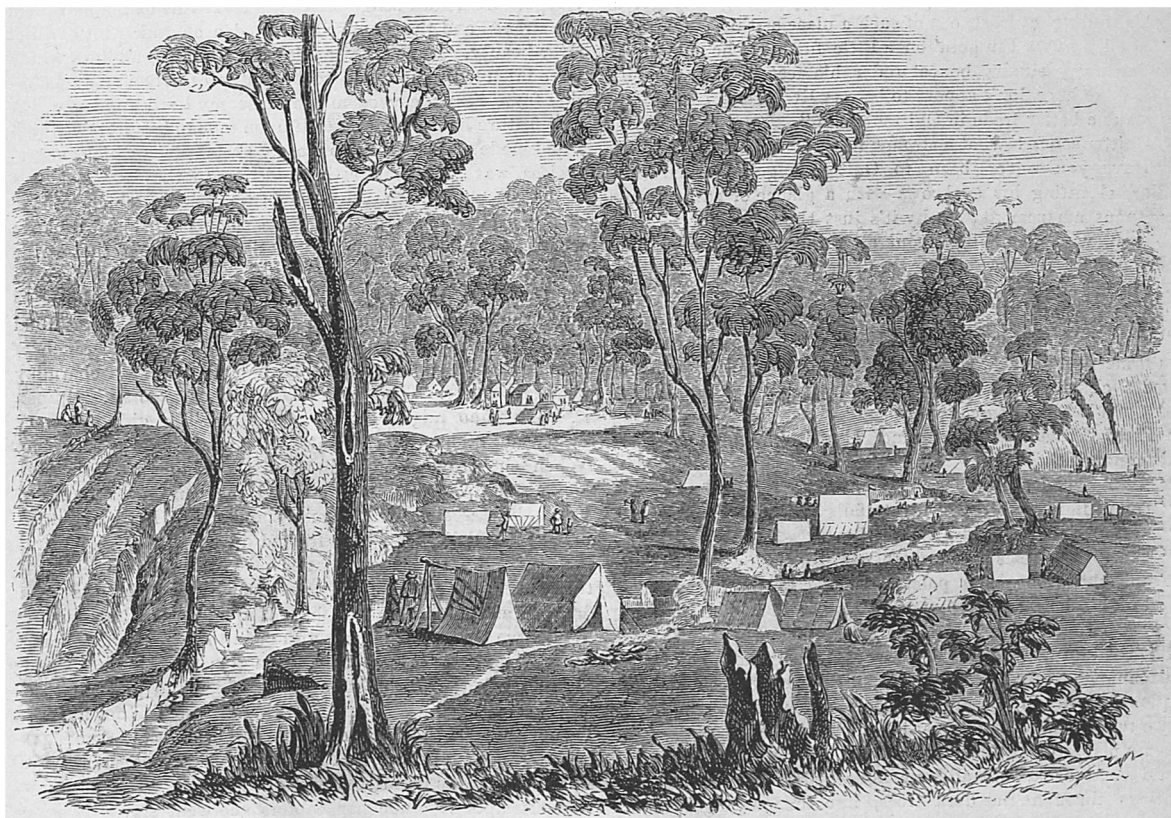
MOUNT ALEXANDER, FROM THE PORCUPINE ROAD.



VIEW OF GOLDEN POINT, BALLARAT—TAKEN FROM THE NORTH-WEST SIDE OF THE CREEK.



VIEW OF THE POST-OFFICE AND THE "ARGUS" OFFICE, FOREST CREEK DIGGINGS.



VIEW AT THE JUNCTION OF BARBER'S CREEK AND THE FOREST CREEK—THE GOVERNMENT CAMP IN THE DISTANCE.